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ABSTRACT

An analysis of the department chair role to determine the extent of role ambiguity and role strain inherent in the job is the purpose of this report. Methodology is based on structured interviews with 56 department chairs in 9 high schools in one district and content analysis of written job descriptions. The findings identify six factors of role ambiguity and strain in the department chair's job: equivocal job descriptions; conflicting functions; vague goals; lack of agreement by role senders; ineffective professional development opportunities; and inadequate resources. Recommendations propose rewriting job descriptions and providing staff development opportunities and sufficient resources to support the department chair. The appendix includes a copy of the interview guide. (15 references) (LMI)

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THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR: ROLE AMBIGUITY AND ROLE STRAIN

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February 1990

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THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR: ROLE AMBIGUITY AND ROLE STRAIN

With the increased social and educational demands currently being placed upon the secondary schools, there is much to be learned about the changed roles of educators. Role analysis is a valuable research tool for describing the complexities of roles in schools. However, the process has not yet been applied to the role of the secondary school department chair.

The objective of this study is to analyze the role of the department chair in one school district to determine the extent of role ambiguity and role strain that exist in the role. This study has particular significance because the department chairs have no teaching responsibilities, lessening the degree of ambiguity and strain that can be attributed to that function. This paper will provide a review of the literature on department chairs before introducing details of the study, including the research design, results, and conclusions.

Literature Review

It is generally agreed in the literature that the role of the department chair is not well understood, lacks a clear definition, and is not well articulated (Hord & Murphy, 1985; Marcial, 1984). The lack of a clear identity for the department chair has resulted in a confusion of purpose (Costanza, Tracy, & Holmes, 1987) and in repeated suggestions that the role be reconsidered (Turner, 1983). The department chair has not been the focus of much research. The few studies which have been done discuss role ambiguity and role strain as problems for the department chair, but fail to assess the extent to which they exist (Hord & Murphy, 1985; Hall & Guzman, 1984).

The Department Chair Role

While the literature generally places the department chair in the realm of instructional leader (Costanza et al., 1987; Turner, 1983), there are questions as to the scope of this leadership (Hall & Guzman, 1984), as well as its seriousness. For instance, a study conducted by Anderson and Nicholson (1987) identified the most important functions of the department chair as allocating personnel and materials and transmitting and interpreting school goals, while their instruction-related functions were viewed as unimportant. Increasingly, emphasis has been put on the department chair as an administrative resource (Hunsaker, DeRoche, & Kujawa, 1987). In a random survey of California high school principals, the most important tasks for the department chair were identified as budgeting, developing curriculum, serving on curriculum committees, working with other department heads, and curriculum writing (Hunsaker, DeRoche, & Kujawa, 1987).

Role Ambiguity and Role Strain

Role ambiguity is the lack of clear, consistent information regarding the rights, duties, and responsibilities of a role and how it can best be performed (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snock, & Rosenthal, 1964). Lack of clearly defined job descriptions, unclear lines of authority, and unrealistic goals and objectives are some of the reasons for the role ambiguity and strain that department chairs experience (Hord & Murphy, 1985; Kottkamp & Mansfield, 1985). Role strain is the simultaneous occurrence of two or more inconsistent behaviors expected of an individual's role, or contradictory expectations for the same role (Schmuck & Miles, 1971; Kahn et al., 1964).

Role ambiguity and strain are important elements to address, because they have been related to job dissatisfaction, tension, emotional exhaustion, burnout, and powerlessness, and have been identified as

organizational stressors (Singleton, 1987; Capel, 1987; Kottkamp & Mansfield, 1985; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982; Kahn et al., 1964).

Sources of Ambiguity and Strain

Research suggests that the department chair role is inconsistent in the way it is operationalized within a school as well as within a district (Hord & Murphy, 1985; Hunsaker, DeRoche, & Kujawa, 1987). Hord and Murphy (1985) suggest that this variability is due to situational factors such as principal or district policy, monetary compensation, slack time, and training. These factors mandate certain behaviors while discouraging others. Hall and Guzman (1984) maintain that how the principal defines the department chair role is critical, and district policy, the size of the salary differential, the amount of release time that is available, and the subject area are less important explainers of the likelihood of department heads being effective facilitators of change. Principals' varying definitions of the department chair role may be due to a lack of specific direction from the central office, yet this can not be corroborated through the research because of a lack of district-level analysis. While several such studies have been completed, they have not addressed this concern (Anderson & Nicholson, 1987; Hord & Diaz-Ortiz, 1986).

Research Design

The Walnut department chair study evolved as part of an overall effort to improve a school district rising from decline. The school district is located in a northeastern urban city of 350,000 residents. It has a pupil population of 49,000, of whom 65% are black, 25% are hispanic, and 10% are white. Approximately 7,500 staff provide services to 13 high schools (six comprehensive, four alternative, and three magnet), 61 elementary and middle

schools, and 8 special education schools. Educational policy for the district is ostensibly determined by an elected board of education consisting of nine members. However, major educational decisionmaking takes place in a highly political context with the mayor playing a significant and often direct role.

Concern about the instructional viability of Walnut's high schools had been heightened by the district's earlier participation in a study of 10 mid-Atlantic urban high schools. That study, Building Commitment Among Students and Teachers: An Exploratory Study of 10 Urban High Schools (Firestone, Rosenblum, & Webb, 1987), involved two comprehensive high schools in the district and contributed, in part, to this later, broader study of the district's high schools.

The Walnut department chair study began in the fall of 1988 with the establishment of a planning team. The team consisted of four RBS research and development staff, Walnut's deputy superintendent, the associate superintendent of secondary schools, and two comprehensive high school principals. Team members met several times and, after considerable discussion, agreed upon the objectives of the study, developed the interview protocol and submitted it for review by the superintendent. The protocol was then piloted, appropriate changes were made, and it was administered to Walnut's department chairs. During the winter of 1988-89, six interviewers began the data collection process. Over a two-week period, structured interviews were conducted with 56 department chairs in six comprehensive and three magnet high schools. The interview team operated from protocols of 20 questions developed to obtain descriptive information (see Appendix A). The interviews lasted approximately one and one-half hours and yielded data on many aspects of the department chair role. A content analysis of the

department chairs' job description was done, in addition to interviews, to determine discrepancies between written policy and actual practice.

Results

Six determinants of the department chair role were identified. They are: job description, functions, goals, extent of agreement by role senders, professional development opportunities, and resources. Results of these analyses are presented in the sections that follow.

Job Description

The department chairs' job description is a determinant of their role, as it communicates duties and expected priorities. It is a vehicle for formal communication between the central office and the department chair.

The curricular/instructional functions of the department chair, as stated in the job description, are:

- keeps abreast of current and newly proposed curricula
- participates in the development and implementation of new curriculum courses according to the needs identified in his/her area of expertise
- demonstrates leadership in innovative practices
- conducts workshops
- develops and implements educational objectives for subjects in his/her area of expertise
- plans compensatory education programs
- plans and develops multi-teaching materials
- designs and supervises tests and examinations
- reviews lesson plans
- arranges for or conducts demonstration lessons as required and teaches some classes as per contract
- participates in activities that promote professional growth.

The administrative responsibilities of the department chair as stated in the job description, are:

- serves as a member of the administrative team, acting as a liaison between the department and the other facets of the school
- prepares necessary reports, materials, and correspondence
- participates in and supervises assembly programs
- assists in the resolution of discipline problems referred by teachers
- orients new teachers and substitutes
- conducts departmental meetings
- encourages teachers to improve professionally by joining organizations, taking courses, and attending meetings
- arranges for supplementary class activities, such as speakers, visits, trips, contests, etc.
- supervises compensatory education programs.

These functions are broadly stated, and the scope of responsibility for the department chair is wide. This is further compounded by the addition of the final job description item: performs other duties, consistent with specific contractual terms of employment, as assigned by appropriate superiors. This item leaves department chairs at the mercy of unnamed superiors to augment their daily duties with a wide range of additional tasks.

Functions

The functions which the department chairs carry out are basically two: curriculum/instruction and administration. The department chair role is largely determined by expectations based on these two functions. Analysis of them reveals a stress felt by department chairs which is reflected in statements such as, "My major responsibility is the improvement of instruction (but) my role is expanding with more and more responsibilities," and

"We don't spend enough time with instruction because we're so busy with so many other things."

Curriculum/instruction. Among the descriptions of their curricular/-instructional tasks, department chairs included activities that are usually considered administrative functions. For example, department chairs (33%) stated that observing and evaluating teachers is the most frequently performed task. (Note: This task is not even included in the written job description.) Reviewing lesson plans and developing curriculum were their second most frequently performed tasks (25%). Other tasks included serving on curriculum committees and preparing resource materials (12%). Their remaining tasks covered a wide range of activities including developing and monitoring course proficiencies, ordering equipment and supplies, scheduling classes, conducting inservice workshops, preparing exams and tests, handling discipline cases, conducting demonstration lessons, holding department meetings, assuming cafeteria and hall duty, handling maintenance issues, photo copying materials, monitoring the budget, preparing administrative reports, scheduling substitute teachers, writing grant proposals, interpreting test data evaluating textbooks, and teaching.

Demands on department chairs often require them to divert their attention from curricular/instructional activities. This becomes apparent when department chairs describe how much time they spend carrying out their various responsibilities. Three-fourths of the department chairs spend 40% or less of their time each day dealing with curricular/instructional activities. This diversion from curriculum and instruction is described by one department chair who said, "We're supposed to just be for instruction and this should be adhered to as closely as possible (but) for hall duty I

was pulled to another building (and) I wasted 20 minutes between each period for a 4-minute hall duty."

Department chairs expressed concern that their job responsibilities weren't sufficiently focused on curriculum and instruction. Several department chairs (63%) perceived their role ideally as "helping teachers do a better job in the classroom." However, in reality they said they spent "too much administrative time at (the) expense of instructional improvement." Of those department chairs who were comfortable with their responsibilities (17%), one-half were from the district's magnet schools. This quote from a magnet school department chair describes the situation in that environment: "I have the freedom here to focus on what I want. That is less so in a comprehensive high school where most of the work is paperwork and discipline. My focus is on the improvement of instruction. That is where it should be."

Frustration was expressed by some department chairs who felt they were not as helpful to their staff with curricular/instructional support (12%). "I could be more helpful in instruction," one department chair commented, "but it's not possible to spend more time with them (teachers)." Another department chair said, "I haven't been available to teachers enough. [I have] no time because of other duties." Despite the diversions that direct most department chairs away from curriculum and instruction, they responded most frequently that they are most helpful to their staff when they can serve as curriculum/instruction resource people (37%). However, they also see themselves helpful as providers of equipment and supplies (25%), and as disciplinarians for their departments (11%). In addition to these three specific responses, they included a number of vague ones such as: providing support for them to get the job done, doing what needs to be done, and,

assisting them with problems. This vagueness indicates department chairs spread themselves across a large number of diverse tasks. As one department chair said, "It makes it difficult to balance. I'm not doing justice to anything."

Administration. In general, there was more agreement among department chairs regarding the nature of administrative activities that assume large amounts of their time. For example, of the administrative tasks in which they most often engage, handling discipline was most frequently mentioned (58%), followed by hall duty (55%), cafeteria patrol (39%), and ordering supplies (28%). (Note: Percentages add to more than 100% because multiple examples were cited in each case.) Observation, supervision, and evaluation were mentioned as an administrative function, as well (28%). Several other administrative responsibilities, including contact with parents (21%), attendance duties (14%), scheduling (10%), paperwork (10%), and inventory maintenance (10%) were also mentioned, although they were named less frequently. The remaining responses were mentioned by a number of respondents. These activities generally represented typical administrative tasks, although a few curricular/instructional tasks were mentioned. Responses included the following activities: coordinating field trips, administering tests, arranging for substitutes, doing detention duty, duplicating materials, budgeting, doing clerical work, scheduling inservice programs, preparing lessons, covering classes, reviewing lesson plans, and proposal writing.

Some (35%) of the department chairs said they spend at least half of their day carrying out administrative tasks. Many (50%) said they spend more than one-third of their day in administration. The remainder (15%)

said they spend approximately one-quarter of their day in similar kinds of activities.

The department chair role has undergone change, becoming increasingly administrative in function. Many department chairs (46%) provided evidence of role changes that have evolved in the district over time. Many department chairs stated that initially the role was "more focused" and "better defined," but over the years it had become "much more diffuse." "I am always in a reactive mode, which is symptomatic of how the entire system operates," said one department chair. Added was the comment, "We jokingly refer to this as the adventure and we don't know what we will encounter from day to day." One-half of the respondents cited an increased emphasis on administrative functions as the reason for the change. "I am faced with more administrative duties and discipline problems," explained one department chair. Another said, " When I first started, there was more emphasis on improvement of instruction."

Goals

Department chairs' goals were stated in four general categories: student outcomes (44%), administration (39%), instruction (28%), and curriculum (26%). (Note: Percentages exceed 100% because several goals were stated by each respondent.) Overall, these goals were stated very broadly. For instance, student outcome goals included: to prepare students for college and everyday life, to make students functioning members of society, and, to ensure that every youngster learns and receives passing grades. More specifically, improving students' standardized test scores was mentioned by several respondents.

Administrative goals stated by department chairs included such statements as: to help teachers perform to the maximum, to provide an

environment conducive to learning for my staff, to make sure the department is running smoothly, and, to do something about inadequate supplies and equipment.

Curriculum/instructional goals were broadly stated as well. They included: to improve instruction, and to provide the best instruction possible, and, curriculum expansion, improvement, revision, and implementation. However, an almost equal number of comments were stated more specifically. For instance, department chairs mentioned increasing the number of level two classes, the development of seminar-like courses, the creation of a journalistic communications major in one of the magnet schools, and the inclusion of chemistry, international relations, and geography courses and writing electives. Also, some department chairs stated that their goal was "to do more inservicing with teachers."

Curriculum goals were disproportionately mentioned by teachers in the magnet schools (50%, as opposed to 20% in the non-magnet schools). However, magnet school department chairs were no more specific than department chairs in the other schools in articulating their curriculum goals.

The varied goals of department chairs can, in part, be attributed to the source(s) of these goals. Many department chairs arrived at their goals through personal reflection and on a purely individualized basis (35%). A small proportion viewed their goals as originating both personally and through the district (12%), while still fewer said that they arrived at their goals only through the district (8%) or only through the school (7%). This lack of district-based direction is also evidenced in the comments of department chairs, such as: there is very little leadership from downtown, district goals are not clearly defined, the district has instructional and attendance goals that are general, and, the district and school goals are

not driving -- they are things like improving teacher attendance. One response in particular exemplified the broadness of goals and lack of direction that seemed to frustrate department chairs: "The district has formalized goals, i.e., improving attendance, instruction, cutting down on class-cutting, drug problems, and truancy." Only 2 of the 44 respondents stated with any specificity what they regarded as the district's goal for department chairs: "The district is always saying that a department chair's main role is the improvement of instruction," and "The philosophy in the district is to constantly improve instruction."

Agreement by Role Senders

The agreement reached by those defining the department chair role, the central office and building administration, largely determines the duties performed by the chair. If there is a high level of agreement between these role senders regarding the responsibilities of the department chair, their tasks will be more clearly defined.

Generally, the department chairs do not have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Many comments referred to a lack of clear expectations communicated to the department chair by the central office: I'm not clear what the central office expects, the superintendent doesn't understand our role or function in the school, and, other than the job description I don't have a clear image of what they want. Respondents reported this was primarily the result of little central office contact and communication with the department chairs. Department chairs stated: The central office is not aware of all of the things we do, (they) are too far away from the school to know what issues we face, and, I never sat down and talked to the central office about their expectations.

Department chairs viewed building administrators as being uncertain about the duties department chairs should be performing. This seems to be attributed to two factors that were most frequently mentioned: a lack of clear boundaries between the vice-principal and department chair positions, and a general lack of understanding on the part of the principal about the functions of the department chair. Respondents most frequently mentioned that there is overlap between the vice-principal and department chair responsibilities or a lack of understanding about where one job begins and the other ends. Comments such as "we pick-up slack for the vice-principals" and "we do a lot of clerical and scheduling work which should be done by the vice-principals" exemplify this.

Department chairs say they try to clarify their roles by telling the the principals about their responsibilities. For example: "We try to tell the principal what we're supposed to be doing, but it doesn't always work that way because they try to give us things to do that aren't in our department." Due to this lack of clarity about their functions, department chairs often feel they are required to assume duties that are not undertaken by other administrators and become their responsibility by default. One respondent referred to department chairs as "garbage men" when discussing their clean-up responsibilities that are not assumed by others. Another noted: "Their (administrators) philosophy is to give it to the department chairs -- they don't do anything. Administrators fill their voids using the department chair. Principals use department chairs for their own needs."

There are conflicting expectations of the department chair between the central office and building administrators. As one department chair stated, "People in the central office don't really know what our job is -- what we're doing or thinking. There is no coordination between the central

office, school administration, and what we actually have to do. They set certain goals uptown and school administrators want to do the opposite and we may want to do something else." Another respondent succinctly noted, "I get five different orders from five different administrators." Another said, "I should answer to one person, but I am placed in a compromising position."

Professional Development Opportunities

Professional development opportunities made available to department chairs by the district are important determinants of their role. They shape the focus of leadership and largely define the priorities of department chairs.

The professional development activities that department chairs participate in are divided among five major components: professional associations (32%); conferences offered outside the district (28%); Instructional Theory Into Practice (ITIP) as offered through the district (26%); other district-wide staff development opportunities (24%); and programs offered at local colleges, such as advanced placement certification and computer training (21%). (Note: Percentages exceed 100% because multiple activities were cited.) The district staff development opportunities were almost all content-specific; only 2 of the 53 respondents mentioned a role-specific activity -- an orientation for new administrators and a management training workshop.

Department chairs were generally not enthusiastic about the professional development opportunities made available to them by the district. Professional development is viewed as inadequate in terms of both the number and content of activities, according to 35% of the respondents, because

they are not oriented toward department chairs or administrators (7%), and they do not involve sharing and interacting with other high schools and school districts (10%). (Note: No explanations were offered by 55% of the respondents.) In addition, when asked to talk about their involvement, they first mentioned out-of-district activities more than half of the time.

Resources

The availability of resources determine the range of obligations that the department chair must assume. For instance, if the chairs are lacking clerical staff this will impact upon the extent to which they have to undertake clerical responsibilities.

There is significant agreement among department chairs (75%) that the resources provided to support department operations are inadequate. They offered several examples of inadequate resources, including clerical support (25%), books (20%), computers (16%), photocopiers (12%), lab/AV equipment (12%), facilities (11%), instructional materials (11%), and budget (11%). (Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% because multiple examples were cited.)

Other inadequate resources identified by fewer respondents included professional staff, time, office equipment, and staff development. Comments of the department chairs were very telling, as well. One said, "The number one concern is that students lack materials and textbooks. There are no supplemental materials. There is only one Xerox machine that is always broken. There is so much coming with computers, videos, and other technology and we don't have the money to buy these things." Another comment is equally as powerful. "When I arrived, everything was lacking. I have borrowed materials from all over the city. There is not enough

instructional space. Much of our instruction is being done in inadequate rooms. We also need clerical staff. We do all our own typing."

Conclusions

Analysis of the six determinants of the department chair role in this district indicate that the job description, goals, extent of agreement by role senders, and professional development opportunities are sources of role ambiguity, and the department chairs' functions and resource availability are sources of role strain.

Role Ambiguity

Role ambiguity is the lack of clear, consistent information regarding the rights, duties, and obligations of a role and how it can best be performed (Kahn et al., 1964). By analyzing the results of information obtained on the job description, department chair goals, the extent of agreement by role senders, and professional development opportunities, the presence of ambiguity in the role of the department chair can be assessed.

Job description. Job descriptions are usually broad because of the need for flexibility, but the job description for department chairs in Walnut does not communicate duties effectively. It outlines only broad and general areas of responsibility for the department chair in curriculum/-instruction and administration and does not clearly state which of these should take priority. The lack of specific goals within each of these areas of responsibility causes the department chair difficulty in establishing a clear purpose or expectations. For instance, department chairs are asked to be a liaison for their department with "other facets of the school," without

stating with whom they are to function as a liaison and how this duty can best be performed.

Goals. The lack of clear and consistent direction from the central office and building administration is reflected in the goals of department chairs and the origination of these goals. Generally, an almost equal number of administrative and curriculum/instructional goals were stated both vaguely and specifically by department chairs. Of note, however, is the variation of these goals, which indicates the presence of substantial role ambiguity. Also, the department chairs' goals are overwhelmingly personal in origin, which explains in large part the vast array of goals mentioned and substantiates the lack of clear and consistent communication by the district in setting and defining those goals.

Extent of agreement by role senders. There is a lack of clarity as to what is expected of the department chairs by the central office and building administrators, and there are inconsistencies in the messages given the department chairs by those role senders.

The principals' lack of understanding about the department chair role, as perceived by the department chair, also contributes to the role ambiguity they experience. They are often delegated tasks they believe to be responsibilities of the vice-principal. They inherit duties by default, as well, which indicates that their role is not sufficiently defined. Also, department chairs view the demands placed on them by the central office and building administration as lacking in coordination and often incompatible. This lack of consistent information regarding department chairs' obligations as communicated to them by their various role senders is a source of role ambiguity.

Professional development opportunities. The professional development activities available to department chairs are not regarded by them as effective sources of role definition. The activities are almost exclusively content-specific, and do not convey information regarding department chairperson duties and how they can best be performed.

Role Strain

Role strain is the simultaneous occurrence of two or more inconsistent behaviors expected of an individual's role, or contradictory expectations for the same role (Schmuck et al., 1972; Kahn et al., 1964). By assessing the functions of and resources available to the department chair, we can better determine the extent to which role strain exists for them.

Functions. The tension between curriculum/instruction and administration places a strain on the department chair role because department chairs do not have a clear sense of where they should be placing their time and energy. Administrative demands frequently require department chairs to divert their attention from curriculum/instructional activities. Department chairs expressed frustration with the need to satisfy responsibilities falling in the realm of both functions. They do not feel that they can adequately fulfill their curriculum/instruction functions when occupied with administrative responsibilities.

Interestingly, this resulted in a noticeable confusion as to which responsibilities were in the realm of what function. This is evidenced by the variety of administrative duties mentioned when the chairs were asked to discuss their curriculum/instruction functions, and the inclusion of observation, evalution, and supervision within the realm of both functions.

Resource availability. Due to a lack of resources, most notably clerical support and books, department chairs perform a variety of tasks

which detract from, and often contradict, their behavior as instructional leaders. There is an ever-present demand upon them to acquire more texts and supplies, or secure clerical equipment or assistance, which greatly impacts upon their fulfillment of curriculum/instructional expectations.

Recommendations

The results of this study indicate that role ambiguity and role strain exist for department chairs in Walnut, which has implications for them particularly and for department chairs throughout American secondary schools.

In Walnut, a decision needs to be reached about the primary responsibilities of the department chair by all involved parties. These responsibilities should clearly reflect the district goals and priorities and provide guidance as to how department chairs should function to support school improvement. The job description, then, must be rewritten, reflecting these agreed upon functions and priorities.

Staff development must be aimed at supporting these duties and priorities and should be oriented specifically toward the department chair role. This may include sharing and interacting with department chairs in other districts to enable them to increase their effectiveness. Lastly, sufficient resources must be allocated to support the primary responsibilities. This will reinforce the priorities of the department chairs and send clear messages to them as to how their time and energy should be allocated.

While this study is limited because of its restricted sample, focusing on the department chair in one district, it does have implications outside of the Walnut School District. The study has identified six factors which define the department chair role. This identification has called attention

to the sources of ambiguity and strain to a greater extent than previous department chair research.

This study also highlights the need for more study of the department chair role as it exists across public secondary schools and within particular school systems. If more knowledge can be obtained regarding the extent of role ambiguity and strain, and the sources of these stressors, perhaps department chairs can then be free to become more meaningful instructional change facilitators and contributors to school improvement.

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Appendix A

DEPARTMENT CHAIR INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Frequencies
(N=56)

I. RESPONSIBILITIES

1A. What department do you chair?

Variety of more than one discipline	=	20
Industrial Arts/Home Economics/Fine Arts	=	6
Math	=	5
English	=	5
Health/PE	=	4
Guidance	=	4
Social Studies	=	3
Athletics	=	3
Science	=	3
Business	=	1
ESOL	=	1
Special Studies	=	1

1B. How many teachers are full-time, 100% assigned members of the department?

0	=	2
1 - 5	=	2
6 - 10	=	21
11 - 15	=	18
16 - 20	=	9
21 - 25	=	3
No answer	=	1

1C. How many teachers are part-time, less than 100% assigned?

0	=	50
1 - 5	=	4
6 - 10	=	1
11 - 15	=	1

1D. How long have you been in the district?

1 - 5	=	1
6 - 10	=	1
11 - 15	=	4
16 - 20	=	19
21 - 25	=	15
26 - 30	=	5
31 - 35	=	7
36 - 40	=	1
41 - 45	=	1
Don't know	=	1
No answer	=	1

1E. How long have you been a department chair in this school?

1 - 5	=	32
6 - 10	=	7
11 - 15	=	11
16 - 20	=	5
21 - 25	=	1

1F. What other positions in this district have you held?*

Teacher	=	35
Department chair	=	10
Guidance counselor	=	4
Coach	=	2
Band director	=	1
Central office staff	=	1
Vice-principal	=	1
Assistant principal	=	1
No answer	=	8

1G. What other positions outside of the district have you held?*

Teacher	=	11
Adjunct faculty	=	6
Corporate work	=	3
Central office	=	2
Administration	=	4
Other	=	2
No answer	=	28

2A. What are your major responsibilities as a department chair in the following areas? Describe.

- Instruction

Observing and evaluating teachers	=	18
Reviewing lesson plans	=	13
Preparing resource materials	=	7
Wide range of activities	=	17
No answer	=	1

2B. - Curriculum

Developing curriculum	=	12
Serving on curriculum committees	=	6
Wide range of activities	=	32
No answer	=	6

* = Respondents answers included in more than one category.

2C. ● Working with other department chairs

Administrative meetings	=	7
High school proficiency test reinforcement	=	7
Discipline	=	7
Sharing equipment and supplies	=	7
Do not work with other department chairs	=	6
Reinforcing basic skills concepts	=	4
Textbook selection	=	4
Wide range of other activities	=	4
No answer	=	9

2D. ● Administrative duties in the school*

Handling discipline	=	32
Hall duty	=	30
Cafeteria patrol	=	22
Ordering supplies	=	15
Observation, superivision, and evaluation	=	15
Contact with parents	=	12
Attendance duties	=	7
Scheduling	=	5
Paperwork	=	5
Inventory maintenance	=	5

2E. ● Working with teachers (other than instruction)*

Instructional comments	=	18
Student discipline	=	14
Supervision/observation	=	7
Wide range of other activities	=	4
No answer	=	10

2F. ● Working with students*

Discipline	=	25
Counseling	=	13
Tutoring	=	10
Working with school programs	=	6
Preparing students for contests	=	4
Cafeteria/hall duty	=	3
Wide range of other activities	=	6
No answer	=	5

2G. ● Are there any other responsibilities that you have that we haven't discussed? What are they?

Wide range of responsibilities already mentioned in 2A - 2F	=	28
No	=	4
Inapplicable	=	6
No answer	=	18

* = Respondents answers included in more than one category.

3. How well do your current responsibilities fit with your image of what you should be doing as a department chair?

Not enough instructional emphasis	=	34
Good fit	=	9
Inapplicable	=	11
No answer	=	2

4. What percentage of your day is spent carrying out your responsibilities in the following areas? (should approximate 100)

	Instruction	Curriculum	Working with other department chairs	Administrative duties in the school	Working with teachers	Working with students	Other
0	3	2	1				
1 - 10	7	15	16	3	13	17	2
11 - 20	13	15	4	4	8	5	
21 - 30	13	6	1	4		1	
31 - 40	4	1		7	1	1	1
41 - 50	1		2	12			
51 - 60				1			
61 - 70				1			1
71 - 80				5			
81 - 90							
91 -100				1			

It depends	=	1
Inapplicable	=	3
No answer	=	8

* = Respondents answers included in more than one category

II. GOALS

5. What are your goals as department chair? (Probe: What are you trying to accomplish?)*

Students outcomes	=	24
Administration	=	21
Instruction	=	15
Curriculum	=	14
No answer	=	2

6. How did you arrive at these goals? (Probe: Are they district, school, department, or individual goals?)

Individual	=	18
Individual + district	=	6
District	=	4
School	=	3
School + district	=	1
Individual, district, & school	=	1
Inapplicable	=	14
No answer	=	4

III. ROLE EXPECTATIONS AND SUPPORT

7A. Are there differences between your expectations for what you are to do and those of central office staff members?

Yes	=	22
No	=	19
Don't know	=	11
No answer	=	4

7B. (If yes): What are these differences?*

The central office does not know what my role is	=	13
The central office is made up of elementary people	=	9
Other	=	13

7C. Are there differences between your expectations for what you are to do and those of building administrators?

Yes	=	27
No	=	24
Don't know	=	1
No answer	=	4

* = Respondents answers included in more than one category.

7D. (If yes): what are these differences?* (Most frequent responses:)

Similarity, overlap between vice-principal and department chair	=	3
Department chair is used to fill voids	=	2
Department chair is answerable to vice-principals and principal	=	2
Principals are supportive	=	2
Other	=	30
No answer	=	17

8A. Has the nature of your work changed much since you have been in this position?

Yes	=	23
No	=	17
Inapplicable	=	12
No answer	=	4

8B. (If yes): How has it changed and what were the factors that caused it to change? (Probe: Critical events, new policies from the district office or state)

Increased emphasis on administrative functions	=	12
Initially role was more focused	=	5
Other	=	6

8C. (If no): What prevents it from changing?

Wide range of answers	=	12
Inapplicable	=	5

9A. Do you have what you need to get your job done? (Probe: Clerical, paraprofessional, time, money, space, equipment)

Yes	=	7
No	=	44
Inapplicable	=	2
No answer	=	3

9B. Which of these are most important to you?*

Clerical support	=	13
Books	=	10
Computers	=	8
Photocopiers	=	7
Lab/AV equipment	=	7
Facilities	=	6
Instructional materials	=	6
Budget	=	6
Inappropriate	=	1
No answer	=	4

* = Respondents answers included in more than one category.

10A. What are some of the professional development opportunities available to you.*

Professional associations	=	17
Conferences outside the district	=	15
ITIP, offered by the district	=	14
Other staff development offered by the district	=	13
College programs -symposia + workshops	=	11
Journals, magazines	=	4
Monthly scheduled building meetings	=	3
State academy	=	3
Courses	=	2
Union	=	1
Middle States' evaluations	=	1
No answer	=	3

10B. Are they adequate in number and content?

Yes	=	16
No	=	13
Inapplicable	=	16
No answer	=	11

IV. RELATIONSHIPS

11A. Who formally evaluates your work?

- Position

Principal	=	23
Vice-principal	=	20
Principal & vice-principal	=	2
Central office + principal	=	1
Central office + vice-principal	=	1
Don't know	=	3
No answer	=	5

- How frequently?

Once a year	=	26
Twice a year	=	8
Three times a year	=	1
Tenure/three to four	=	1
Two to three times a year	=	1
Inapplicable	=	2
Don't know	=	3
No answer	=	14

* = Respondents answers included in more than one category.

11B. Describe the evaluation process. (Probes: What input do you have, what criteria are used?)

Based on PIP	=	20
Based on paperwork	=	4
Not evaluated yet	=	4
Informal	=	4
Based on student outcomes	=	3
Staff-oriented	=	2
Instructionally based	=	2
Relationships-oriented	=	2
Perfunctory	=	2
Dialogue/discussion	=	2
Don't know	=	2
No answer	=	9

12A. Who supervises your work? (Probes: Provides assistance to you/works with you to make sure you can get your job done)

Principal	=	12
Vice-principal	=	12
Central office	=	5
None	=	4
Principal & vice-principal	=	1
Vice-principal and central office	=	1
Principal & other department chairs	=	1
All other administrators	=	1
Inapplicable	=	5
No answer	=	14

12B. How often and how do you interact?

Daily	=	13
Once to twice weekly	=	4
Discussion of substantive content areas	=	3
When there is a problem	=	3
Once a week	=	2
Informally	=	2
Once a month	=	1
Other	=	5
Inapplicable	=	10
No answer	=	13

13. What percentage of your day is spent interacting with the following people? (should approximate 100)

	Teachers in the department	Other teachers	Other department chairs	Building administration	Central office administration	Students	Parents
0	0	9	9	7	18	6	13
1 - 10	1	20	17	20	15	7	20
11 - 20	2	1	4	6	1	13	1
21 - 30	9	1	3	1		5	
31 - 40	5					2	
41 - 50	5	1				1	
51 - 60	4	2					
61 - 70	3						
71 - 80	4						
81 - 90	1						
91 -100			1				

Inapplicable = 13
No answer = 9

14A. Who has the most influence over curriculum and instruction decisions in (respondent's subject area)?

Department chairs	=	22
Central office administration	=	13
Building-level administration	=	6
Teachers	=	4
Joint efforts	=	2
Inapplicable	=	6
No answer	=	3

14B. Who has the least influence?

Teachers	=	11
Students	=	4
Principal	=	3
Department chairs	=	3
Central office	=	3
Parents	=	3
Vice-principal	=	1
Counselors	=	1
Don't know	=	4
No answer	=	23

14C. How much influence do you have?

A lot	=	18
Medium/some	=	2
Not much	=	3
Don't know	=	1
Inapplicable	=	18
No answer	=	14

14D. How much influence should you have?

Same	=	16
More	=	8
Inapplicable	=	21
No answer	=	11

V. RESULTS

15A. Have you been responsible for initiating any programs, policies, or practices in your content area?

Yes	=	40
No	=	12
Inapplicable	=	1
No answer	=	3

15B. (If yes): What are they and what has been their impact?

Examples

Courses	=	9
Clubs/student programs	=	5
Curriculum development/renewal	=	4
Wide range of answers	=	22

Impact

Increased student learning	=	2
Improved test scores	=	1
Influence over the curriculum	=	1
More personal involvement with students	=	1
More students going on to college	=	1
No impact	=	1
Inapplicable	=	2
No answer	=	47

16A. In what ways are you most helpful to your departmental staff?

Serving as curriculum/instruction resource people	=	19
Providers of equipment and supplies	=	13
Disciplinarians for their departments	=	5
Wide range of vague responses (getting the job done, doing what needs to be done, assisting with problems, providing support)	=	11
Don't know	=	2
Inapplicable	=	1
No answer	=	5

16B. In what ways are you least helpful?

With curriculum and instruction	=	6
Not enough time to provide support	=	5
Wide range of answers (working conditions, money, clerical support, supervision)	=	29
Don't know	=	2
Inapplicable	=	7
No answer	=	7

17. What do you see as the future of instructional improvement in the district?

Improve	=	9
Not improve	=	4
Stay the same	=	2
Become decentralized	=	2
Emphasize computers	=	2
Emphasize basic skills	=	1
Inapplicable	=	23
No answer	=	13

18. Is there a relationship between your work as a department chair and student achievement? Explain.

Yes	=	36
No	=	3
Don't know	=	2
Inapplicable	=	1
No answer	=	6

Explanations

Through role in the high school proficiency testing process	=	5
Through instructional supervision	=	4
Wide range of various answers	=	27

19. What do you perceive as the future for the role of department chair in the district?

Instructional	=	13
Administrative	=	8
Same	=	5
Abolished	=	5
Don't know	=	6
Inapplicable	=	14
No answer	=	5

20. With whom else can we speak to get additional insight into the department chairperson role, other than a department chair person?*

Teachers	=	12
Principals	=	10
Vice-principal	=	9
Central office	=	6
Students	=	4
No one	=	3
No answer	=	12

* = Respondents answers included in more than one category.